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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TALLINN 001114

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#) [BO](#) [EN](#)  
SUBJECT: UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT YUSHCHENKO VISITS ESTONIA

Classified By: Classified By: CDA Jeff Goldstein for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. During a visit to Estonia, Ukrainian President Yushchenko emphasized his country's interest in NATO and EU membership, and asked the GOE to send senior officials to Ukraine to explain the benefits of integration. Yushchenko said that a rift between Belarusian President Lukashenko and Russian President Putin over energy prices has created an opportunity to nudge Belarus westward. Foreign Minister Tarasyuk complained he is being made a scapegoat in the political battle between Yushchenko and PM Yanukovych. End Summary.

¶2. (U) During his December 12-13 state visit to Estonia, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko met with President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Enn Eesmaa, former President Arnold Ruutel, and representatives from Estonia's business and academic communities. Yushchenko's official delegation included the following individuals:

- Borys Tarasyuk, Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- Pavel Kiriakov; Ukrainian Ambassador to Estonia;
- Ruslan Demchenko, Head of the President's Cabinet;
- Aleksandr Tsalyi, Deputy Head of the President's Secretariat;

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- Mihail Stepko, Deputy Minister of Education;
- Anatoliy Kinah, MP and Head of the Union of Ukrainian Industrialists
- Anatoliy Ponomarenko, MFA Director of 2nd Department;
- Vladimir Stelmah, Central Bank of Ukraine Chair;
- Viktor Reshetnyak, Mayor of Vyshgorod

¶3. (C) Following the visit, Dr. Kaupo Kand, MFA Ukraine Desk Officer briefed Poloff on Yushchenko's meetings.

-- NATO: Ukraine's NATO and EU membership aspirations dominated the agenda of the meetings. Yushchenko spoke candidly about the problem of popular opposition to NATO membership in his country, especially in the east. Yushchenko assured Ilves that while Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yanukovych disagree on tactics, they are in accord on the goal of NATO membership. Yushchenko cautioned that progress on NATO will take time. Ukraine will not need to hold a referendum if offered NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP), but one will be necessary to approve eventual NATO membership.

-- EU: Yushchenko told Ilves and Ansip that there is less public hostility to EU membership than NATO membership in Ukraine and reiterated his commitment to continue with the necessary economic and political reforms. In an aside, Aleksandr Tsalyi told Kand that he believes the GOU needs

to be "careful not to raise the public's hope for EU membership." (Note: Kand told Poloff he was surprised by the comments and speculated that it reflected GOU concerns regarding recent hostility in Brussels to further EU enlargement. End Note.)

-- INTERNAL POLITICS: On the margins of the meetings, GOE and GOU officials discussed Yushchenko and Yanukovych's battle over efforts to remove Tarasyuk as Foreign Minister. Tarasyuk privately complained to Enn Eesmaa that while he appreciates Yushchenko's support for him, he feels he is being attacked as a proxy for the President. Tsalyi told Kand that Tarasyuk would likely stay on as Foreign Minister until Yushchenko and Yanukovych find a compromise candidate they both can accept to succeed Tarasyuk.

-- BELARUS: Yushchenko told both Ilves and Ansip that Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko has taken Russia's decision to raise gas and oil prices to Belarus as a personal attack against him and his regime, and that Lukashenko has changed his position regarding Russia. Tsalyi and Tarasyuk both stressed to Foreign Minister Urmas

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Paet that Lukashenko's rift with Russian President Vladimir Putin has created an opportunity to nudge Belarus' orientation westward. Tsalyi told Paet that he thought Belarus was serious about reducing its dependence on Russian energy by diversifying its sources and wants to work with Ukraine to develop alternative gas/oil pipelines that bypass Russia. Tarasyuk told Kand that Yushchenko and Yanukovych both feel that the time is right to make overtures to Belarus.

-- RUUTEL AS ENVOY?: In his meetings with both Ilves and Ansip, Yushchenko asked for Estonia's assistance in changing Ukrainian public attitudes toward NATO and EU membership. Yushchenko proposed that senior Estonian government officials and politicians come to Ukraine to

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help explain the benefits of NATO membership. In his meeting with Ansip, Yushchenko specifically suggested former President Arnold Ruutel spearhead this assistance. According to Maksym Kravchuk, a Political Officer at the Ukrainian Embassy in Tallinn, during a private dinner with former President Ruutel, Yushchenko praised Ruutel for assuaging the hostility of Estonians suspicious of EU and NATO membership when he was President. "Ukrainians have had many reformers make the case," Kravchuk explained to us, "but we need a conservative like Ruutel, who has a Soviet past, to argue for NATO and the EU." (Note: A few weeks ago, Ruutel told the Ambassador that he is interested in traveling to countries including Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia to discuss Estonia's democracy and market reform experience. It is not clear, however, that he has any resources or backing to fund his own travel. It is also unlikely that he would be either President Ilves or PM Ansip's first choice as a democracy envoy. End note.)  
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